

The Vessel Analogy At The Opening of Lucretius Book Six

Post by "Don" of September 14, 2023 at 8:31 AM

For those who haven't seen the graphic from 2017, this seems to hold up pretty well:

The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model

"He then perceived that the vessel itself did cause the corruption, and that by its corruption all the things that came into it and were gathered from abroad, however salutary, were spoilt within it; partly because he saw it to be leaky and full of holes so that it could never by any means be filled full; partly because he perceived that it befouled so to say with a nauseous flavor everything within it which it had taken in." Lucretius - Book VI

All Pleasures Are Good, But There Are 3 Common Errors **The Goal**



- 1 - The Uneducated State** - The error of religion and false philosophy; failing to act to study Nature and seal the leaks and holes. The vessel is partly filled with water (representing pleasure), partly with air (representing pain).
- 2 - The Stoic / Ascetic State** - The error of living too simply and seeking only "necessary" pleasure - failing to act to fill the vessel with pleasure, thereby allowing unnecessary pain. The only pain we should not seek to eliminate is that which we choose to accept as the price of greater pleasure. See *Letter to Menoeceus*: "Often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pain brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure."
- 3 - The Vain Desires State** - The error of living too extravagantly and not recognizing the limits of nature - trying to fill the vessel past full so that it is no longer stable and overflows. See PD18: "Bodily pleasure does not increase when the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation."
- 4 - The Epicurean Goal of Life** - Stable and full to the brim with pleasure with no room for pain. This is the condition of PD3: "The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When such pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together." This is also the *Letter to Menoeceus*: "For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid; seeing that the living creature has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look for anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained because of the absence of pleasure, then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure. Wherefore we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing." Here the vessel is full of pleasure; the water and air (pleasure and pain) do not mix. This vessel is painless, but only because it is full of pleasure!

Vatican Saying 63: *There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance.*